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#### THE STATUS OF HUNGARIAN DANUBE-SEA NAVIGATION

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After the war, all Hungarian Danube and seagoing vessels which were left intact were put into service. These included the Budapest, gross capacity 446 tons, volume 648 cubic meters; the Szeged, gross capacity 622 tons, volume 1,000 cubic meters; the Tisza, gross capacity 1,201 tons, volume 1,615 cubic meters; and the Debrecen, gross capacity 1,266 tons, volume 1,755 cubic meters.

Gross capacity is given, since the quantity of the pay load is obtained by subtracting the quantity of fuel, drinking water, and other equipment from the total. The above ships, built by the Ganz Shipyard, are equipped with diesel engines. Their home port is Budapest.

The merchant marine is a productive branch of the national economy. By transporting goods to the consumer, it raises the value of goods. At present, the Hungarian merchant marine confines its activities to the Near East. The character of the operation is intercontinental, however, since Hungary could not ship goods by rail to Alexandria, Egypt. In certain cases, goods could be ferried across, but the costs are prohibitive.

Hungarian ships are a compromise between river boats and seagoing vessels. Therefore, they satisfy the requirements of both river and ocean navigation.

The main task of the Hungarian merchant marine is to deliver goods directly to Turkish and Near Eastern ports, without transshipping. Conversely, it has the task of loading goods in foreign ports and delivering them direct to Hungary, without transshipping.

The Hungarian ships maintain scheduled traffic, i.e., stops are made at certain ports according to a fixed schedule. Freight rates are fixed.

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During the winter, from 15 December to the end of February, service is suspended along the shipping lanes which connect Budapest with the Levant. During this period, goods for export are shipped to the Black Sea ports (Constanza, Stalin) by rail and then transshipped. As a result, the schedules must be sufficiently elastic to prevent losses arising from the seasonal reduction in the quantity of freight shipped.

This problem would not cause any difficulty if Hungary owned eight ships. However, it owns only four ships at present and can, therefore, satisfy shipping requirements to a limited extent only.

Traffic depends on four factors: the quantity of freight to be shipped; available equipment and the skill of the crew; the speed of loading, with due regard to the capacities and individual characteristics of harbors; and the water level of the Danube

The merchant marine should cooperate with the various foreign trade agencies. This cooperation should manifest itself in proper application of freight rates, strict observance of schedules, and proper and careful handling of freight.

Hungary's most important products are found among the goods marked for export: gas and water tubing, agricultural machinery, plate glass, glassware, laboratory equipment, electric and other machinery, textiles, and food products.

Imported goods include knitting yarn, various tanning materials, mineral and industrial semifinished products, and raw materials. In 1949 - 1950, the volume of the ships was exploited 100 percent and their weight capacity 60 percent. This means that the ships were engaged in the transportation of valuable mixed cargoes, rather than of heavy bulk goods. The freight charges in this case are calculated on the basis of volume and not of weight.

A high technical standard is maintained through maintenance work. Preventive maintenance is practiced at all times. The basis for proper maintenance is the issuance of suitable fuel, lubricating materials, spare parts, and tools.

All four ships are suitable for Danube-sea navigation, but the operation of the Debrecen has proved to be most economical. The Five-Year Plan provides for the construction of additional vessels, with a somewhat greater carrying capacity than the existing ones. The maximum draught will remain 3.10 meters. Double bottoms will be constructed in the middle of the ships, under the loading areas. The space between the two bottoms will serve for storage of ballast water or fuel. The distance from the bottom of the ships to the highest point of the superstructure will be 9.30 meters.

The new ships will have substantially higher speeds than the existing ones. The proved three-blade, Hitzler-type steering mechanism will be retained and an additional electric steering mechanism will be installed. Modern cabins, dining rooms, and baths will be provided for the crew. Each ship will be equipped with four 3-ton cranes.

Ships and their cargoes are insured against damage by many insurance companies. There are several agencies which classify ships for the information of the insurance companies. The Soviet Register, the French Bureau Veritas, the English Lloyd's Register, and the Italian Registro Italiano are agencies of this type. Hungarian ships meet the requirements of international traffic and operate under the highest classification.

Hungarian ships are manned by qualified personnel. The Hungarian-Soviet Navigation Company (MESZHART), aided by the Hungarian Workers' Party and the trade unions, provides the necessary technical and ideological training, as well as the necessary sailors. Drawing on Soviet and Polish experience, the Hungarian Office of Navigation is in the process of preparing new courses for officers.

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The volume of traffic of Hungarian ships depends on the efficiency of loading and unloading. This factor determines the time required by a ship to reach its destination and to return to its port of origin. When a ship is in port, the time actually spent in loading or unloading may be considered useful time. All other time spent in waiting, etc., is lost time. It is evident, therefore, that merchandise handling should be speeded up in the Hungarian ports first, especially in the national and free ports. Loading and unloading of larger ships should not take longer than a week. The solution to this problem is apparent when it is considered that Hungarian ships transport primarily mixed cargoes and that they bring back raw materials. The loading of mixed cargoes requires skill and experience, and the loading operation could be performed quickly by three brigades operating on three shifts.

The ship's ship has a serious responsibility concerning the cargo, because once a bill of lading is signed, it becomes commercial paper and circulates freely on the international market. The cargo must therefore be delivered in good condition. It is the responsibility of Hungarian port authorities, but primarily of the shipper, to provide proper packaging. Poor packaging lessens the value of goods and prevents the development of the Hungarian export industry.

Freight charges are determined by either the weight or the volume of the freight. This is natural, since full exploitation of the vessels depends on these two factors. The relationship between the weight capacity of the ship and the volume of the merchandise determines the optimum exploitation of the vessel's cargo capacity. Hungarian seagoing vessels may be considered best exploited, as to both weight and volume, if the merchandise making up the cargo is such that one ton requires 1.5 cubic meters of space.

The water level of the Danube is an important factor in undisturbed traffic, free from transshipping. Experience indicates that during years of normal precipitation there are no serious disruptions to traffic.

It is obvious, from the above that expansion of the Hungarian merchant marine is desirable. Hungarian Danube-sea vessels generally carry valuable mixed cargoes. As a result when the cargo capacity is fully exploited, the draught of the ship is between 2.4 and 2.5 meters. The river is generally deep enough to satisfy this requirement. Even the so-called "cataract" sector between Old Moldavia and Turnu Severin is deep enough.

If the water level of the Danube is low because of a drought, then the Danube-sea vessels do not come as far as Budapest. They anchor in a port along the lower Danube and transship the cargo to various tugs and barges.

After the Rumanians complete the Cernavoda - Black Sea Canal, the round trip between Budapest and Istanbul will be shortened by some 800 kilometers.

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